

## Cyber Centers in Moneragala District

*'To take the village to the world and bring the world to the village'*

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The United States Government has joined the Sri Lanka Ministry of Agriculture to provide information technology to Sri Lankan farmers.

The initiative aims to increase productivity and better link farmers to markets. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the development arm of the U.S. Government, will equip cyber centers that will be managed by four local farmer associations. USAID will also work with members of those associations to develop business models to ensure the long term sustainability of the centers. As part of the same project, USAID and the Ministry of Agriculture have developed a web portal to help farmers access market information available from various ministries and departments.

H.E. President Mahinda Rajapaksa joined the Hon. Minister of Agriculture Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Valerie Fowler, USAID Director James Bednar, and other senior Sri Lankan government officials to launch the event at the Dayata Kirula exhibition in Buttala.

In total, the Ministry of Agriculture will establish 19 cyber centers in the Moneragala District as part of their internet-based agriculture extension program. The centers will provide extension services and cultivation information; agriculture and other training programs such as computer and language training; communication services; market linkages; price information and facilitation of other input supplies.

During the ceremony, Hon Minister Abeywardena stated that he was pleased to join with USAID and in particular with the farmers who are taking an active role in the program, especially in terms of their potential to identify and access new markets. Valerie Fowler, Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Colombo said the centers will "take the village to the world and bring the world to the village."

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